

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00
INRE-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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O R 101145Z APR 78
FM AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7534
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMCONSUL DURBAN
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

DEPT PLEASE PASS AFL-CIO

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB, SHUM, SF, US, UK
SUBJECT: LABOR REFORM: TUCSA AND WIEHAHN

REF: A)JOHANNESBURG 0839 (NOTAL); B)JOHANNESBURG 0787 (NOTAL)
C) STATE 66742

1. SUMMARY: CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO LABOR
LEGISLATION NIC WIEHAHN, IS EXPECTED IN WASHINGTON THIS WEEK
FOLLOWING VISITS TO GENEVA, BRUSSELS AND LONDON, WHERE HE
WAS REPORTEDLY POINTEDLY NOT RECEIVED BY THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF
THE INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENTTM REVELATION BY TUCSA
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GENERAL SECRETARY ARTHUR GROBBELAAR OF THE PROPOSED RECOMMENDA-
TIONS OF THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION HAS CAUSED CONSTURNATION IN
SOME SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNION CIRCLES AND CONCERN OVER THE
FUTURE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE. THE PROPOSED GRANTING
OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS TO BLACKS MAY BE AN EMPTY GESTURE IF THE
NATIONALS OF SO-CALLED BLACK HOMELANDS ARE DENIED TRADE UNION
MEMBERSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. ACCORDING TO BRITISH LABATT VOSE, WHO HAS JUST RETURNED FROM LONDON, BRUSSELS AND GENEVA, WIEHAHN IS SCHEDULED TO DEPART LONDON FOR WASHINGTON ON THE AFTERNOON OF APRIL 10. VOSE REPORTS THAT WIEHAHN WAS REBUFFED IN HIS EFFORTS TO MEET WITH THE ILO AND ICFTU SECRETARY GENERALS. THE ONLY ITS OFFICIALS WHO AGREED TO SEE HIM WERE REBHAN AND THONNISON OF THE IMF, WHO REPORTEDLY TOLD WIEHAHN THEY WERE SKEPTICAL ABOUT HIS PROMISED REFORMS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF HIS FAILURE TO PRODUCE AN INTERIM REPORT AND THE CONTINUED BANNING OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNION LEADERS. KERSTEN DECIDED IN BRUSSELS THAT WIEHAHN SHOULD BE RECEIVED BY ANDREW KAILEMBO.

3. IN WIEHAHN'S ABSENCE, ARTHUR GROBBELAAR, GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA, IS REPORTED BY THE FINANCIAL MAIL TO HAVE REVEALED AT THE CLOSED CONFERENCE WHICH TUCSA HELD LAST WEEK (JOHANNESBURG 0839) THAT THE WIEHAHN COMMISSION WILL RECOMMEND RECOGNITION OF BLACK TRADE UNIONS, COUPLED WITH SWEEPING RESTRICTIONS ON THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AS A WHOLE. A KEY ELEMENT OF THE NEW SYSTEM WILL BE MULTI-RACIAL PLANT-BASED COMMITTEES WHICH, ACCORDING TO GROBBELAAR, WILL BE "VIGOROUSLY ENCOURAGED" AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR TRADE UNIONS. THE COMMITTEES WILL BE GIVEN "SPECIAL FACILITIES" SUCH AS TIME OFF FROM WORK TO CONDUCT THEIR BUSINESS. THE FACT THAT THE COMMITTEES WILL NOT LEVY SUBSCRIPTIONS WILL PRESUMABLY MAKE THEM MORE ATTRACTIVE TO WORKERS THAN UNIONS. REPORTEDLY, GROBBELAAR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAID THE COMMITTEES MAY ALSO ENJOY REPRESENTATION AT INDUSTRIAL COUNCIL AND WAGE BOARD LEVEL.

4. GROBBELAAR REVEALED THAT TRADE UNIONS WILL BE ABLE TO CHOOSE WHETHER TO BE NON OR UNI-RACIAL, BUT THEY WILL HAVE TO PASS "STRINGENT" REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS. UNIONS WHICH FAIL TO GAIN REGISTRATION WILL NOT BE BANNED, BUT THEY WILL BE BARRED FROM ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS. SOME PRESENTLY REGISTERED UNIONS WILL BE DEREGISTERED. MIGRANT WORKERS, PRESUMABLY INCLUDING CITIZENS OF TRANSKEI AND BOPHUTHATSWANA AND NATIONALS OF ANY OTHER HOMELAND WHICH BECOMES INDEPENDENT, WILL BE BARRED FROM TRADE UNION MEMBERSHIP. NEITHER THE CLOSED SHOP NOR THE DEDUCTION OF DUES BY EMPLOYERS WILL BE PROHIBITED, BUT RACIALLY DISCRIMINATORY CLOSED SHOP AGREEMENTS WILL NOT BE ALLOWED.

5. GROBBELAAR AND OTHER OFFICIALS OF TUCSA ARE REPORTED TO HAVE BEEN FURIOUS WHEN THEY LEARNED THAT THE FINANCIAL MAIL GAINED ACCESS TO GROBBELAAR'S REMARKS. UNDER SOUTH AFRICAN LAW, BOTH THE FINANCIAL MAIL AND GROBBELAAR MAY BE SUBJECT TO CRIMINAL PROSECUTION FOR REVEALING MATTERS WHICH ARE SUB JUDICE IN A CABINET COMMISSION.

6. TRADE UNION SOURCES REVEAL THAT SEVERAL PARTICIPANTS IN THE TUCSA CONFERENCE, INCLUDING RAY ALTMAN OF THE DISTRIBUTIVE WORKERS UNION, OBJECTED TO GROBBELAAR'S ACQUIESCENCE IN THE PROPOSED CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICAN LABOR LAW WHICH COULD SERIOUSLY WEAKEN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT AS A RESULT OF THE EXPANSION OF THE COMMITTEE SYSTEM. A RESOLUTION APPROVING GROBBELAAR'S DESCRIPTION OF THE WIEHAHN FINDINGS WAS, NEVERTHELESS, PASSED WITH ONLY ONE OBJECTION, THAT OF MORRIS KAGAN, ALSO OF THE DISTRIBUTIVE WORKERS UNION.

7. COMMENT: IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT SERIOUS OBJECTION TO EXPANSION OF THE PLANT COMMITTEE SYSTEM AT THE EXPENSE OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT WILL COME FROM MANY OF THE INDEPENDENT UNIONS AND THE ALL-WHITE CONFEDERATION.

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NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED.

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